



MONTANA ADVOCACY PROGRAM, INC.

The Civil Rights Protection & Advocacy System for the State of Montana

SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

EXHIBIT NO. 2

DATE: 1-17-07

BILL NO. SB 32

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January 17, 2007

Senate Committee on Public Health, Welfare and Safety
Sen. Dan Weinberg, Chair

RE: SB 32, Long term and local ombudsman access to facilities as necessary

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

The Montana Advocacy Program is charged by Congress with protection and advocacy for individuals with disabilities, particularly those in institutional and other kinds of residential care. Congress created the protection and advocacy system, of which MAP is part, because it recognized that if people in residential services become invisible to the community, they are exceptionally vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

MAP believes that the senior and long-term care and local ombudsman program is critical to preventing and detecting abuse and neglect in over 300 hundred facilities where many thousands of Montana's most vulnerable citizens reside.

We strongly endorse SB 32. In MAP's experience, abuse and neglect are not 9 to 5 issues. In fact, the most serious problems often arise during evenings, nights and weekends, when staffing and programming tend to be diminished and sometimes inadequate. The current statutory limitation on the local ombudsmen's access to residential facilities is inappropriate and unnecessary, and could seriously impede the ability of community oversight to ensure the safety of local facility residents.

Thank you for considering MAP's testimony.

Yours truly,

Anita Roessmann

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